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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001221

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EINV](#) [EAIR](#) [XY](#)

SUBJECT: ECOWAS WELCOMES CHINESE, EUROPEAN INVESTMENT;
NIGERIA TO PAY BISSAU TROOPS

REF: A. ABUJA 1131

[1](#)B. NIAMEY 492 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) concluded its Thirty-Sixth Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government in Abuja June 22. Present were leaders or representatives of all fifteen ECOWAS member states with the exception of Guinea Conakry, as well as Ambassador Said Djinnit, the Special Representative for West Africa of the UN Secretary-General. The Ambassador attended the opening ceremony. For her observations, see reftel A. In their final communique, the assembled governments "recognized the need to deepen the regional integration process" to provide increased opportunities for regional growth and to counter the effects of the global economic slowdown on the region. The communique called on all members to ensure effective implementation of the ECOWAS Protocols on the Free Movement of Persons and Right of Residence, adopted a 5th band of 35% with regards to the ECOWAS Common External Tariff with a view to reclassifying certain products, and "acknowledged" efforts made in harmonizing disparate taxation schemes particularly in the area of Value Added Tax (VAT). The heads of state "welcomed the mobilisation of business entrepreneurs of the region... and the establishment of strategic business partnerships with their counterparts from China and the European Union... and urged them to move forward with these initiatives."

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Authority endorsed the creation of a Regional Infrastructure Fund, particularly in the areas of transportation and energy to be funded by tax receipts from trade, and resolved to accelerate implementation of the Yamoussoukro Agreement on the Liberalisation of Air Transport by convening annual meetings of the Directors-General of Civil Aviation and Managing Directors of airlines serving the ECOWAS region. Participants restated their commitment to agricultural development, and adopted an Action Plan on the Fight Against Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse in West Africa, in addition to the ECOWAS Labour Policy and Regional Policy on Protection and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking.

Guinea-Bissau

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[1](#)3. (SBU) The heads of state condemned the March

assassinations of the President and former President/Chief of Defense staff in Guinea-Bissau, as well as the June murders (widely viewed as retaliatory) of a presidential candidate and a former Defense Minister. The leaders stressed the need for "free, transparent and credible elections" and called upon the international community to provide support for the elections, for reform of the defense and security sector, and restoration of the financial system. The assembled heads of state commended Nigerian President Yar'Adua for his offer to pay the three months salary arrears for the armed forces of Guinea-Bissau, contributing to the budget for elections, and donating vehicles and communications equipment. The others meanwhile agreed to "take up" the issue of arrears for the salaries of civil servants.

Guinea Conakry, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, the Sahel

¶4. (SBU) Attendees expressed concern with the lack of progress in Guinea Conakry on implementation of the timetable for a return to constitutional order, particularly in regards to political party activity and the organization of elections, as well as in Togo with the slow pace of the Inter-Togolese Dialogue. As a result, his colleagues asked President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso to resume his role as facilitator in the Dialogue, noting his success with it prior to the Togolese parliamentary elections in October 2007. They also lauded for his efforts to help restore order in Cote d'Ivoire, which has seen progress since the Ouagadougou Agreements, including the proposed presidential election slated for November 29, 2009. The statesmen condemned the latest killings in Mali, and commended the

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determination of the Malian President to rid the country of terrorists with the help of neighbors and other partners.

Niger

¶5. (SBU) Member states expressed concerns about recent constitutional developments in Niger and appealed to the authorities there to respect the constitution and rule of law, in accordance with the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which was ratified by Niger. (Note: As reported ref B, a week later, on June 29 President Mamadou Tandja of Niger ignored these concerns, dissolving the constitutional court which had refused to rescind its decision invalidating the planned referendum to allow him a third term in office. Tandja also suspended articles of the Constitution prohibiting the removal of members of the court and repealed decrees regarding appointments to the court in a very non-rule of law bid to extend his tenure. End note.)

¶6. (C) Lastly, the meeting paid tribute to Nigerian President and current ECOWAS Chairman Yar'Adua "for his positive contribution to consolidation of the regional integration process and his dedication to the entrenchment of democracy and promotion of good governance in West Africa." (COMMENT: More than one observer noted the irony of Yar'Adua being identified as a champion of democracy and governance. As for his dedication to regional integration, we note that it is the GON which has been the main foot-dragger within ECOWAS on these issues. End Comment.)

SANDERS